

PEACE BECOMES COLD WAR

1945–1950

The United States did not return to its prewar isolationism after World War II. The balance of power in Europe and Asia and the safety of ocean distances east and west that made isolation possible had vanished: the war upset the balance, and advances in air transportation and weaponry surpassed the protection of the oceans. There was now little inclination to dispute the essential rightness of the position Woodrow Wilson espoused after World War I that the nations of the world were interdependent, the peace indivisible. Indeed, in the years immediately following World War II, full participation in world events became a governing dynamic of American life.

With the end of the war, American hopes for a peaceful future focused on the United Nations (UN) formed at San Francisco in 1945. The fifty countries signing the UN Charter agreed to employ “effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression,” including the use of armed force if necessary. The organization included a bicameral legislature: the General Assembly, in which all member nations had representation and a smaller Security Council. The latter had authority to determine when the peace was threatened, to decide what action to take, and to call on member states to furnish military formations. Five founding members of the United Nations (the United States, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, China, and France) had permanent representation on the Security Council and the power of veto over any council action. Since the United Nations’ effectiveness depended largely on the full cooperation of these countries, the primary objective of American foreign policy as the postwar era opened was to continue and strengthen the solidarity those nations had displayed during the war.

U.S. membership in the United Nations implied a responsibility to maintain sufficient military power to permit an effective contribution to any UN force that might be necessary. Other than this, it was difficult



U.S. veterans of the China-Burma-India campaigns arrive in New York on September 27, 1945.

in the immediate aftermath of war to foresee national security requirements in the changed world and consequently to know the proper shape of a military establishment to meet them. The immediate task was to demobilize a great war machine and at the same time maintain occupation troops in conquered and liberated territories. Beyond this lay the problems of deciding the size and composition of the postwar armed forces and of establishing the machinery that would formulate national security policy and govern the military establishment.

Demobilization

The U.S. Army and Navy had separately determined during the war their reasonable postwar strengths and had produced plans for an orderly demobilization. The Navy developed a program for 600,000 men, 370 combat and 5,000 other ships, and 8,000 aircraft. The Army Air Forces was equally specific, setting its sights on becoming a separate service with 400,000 members, 70 combat groups, and a complete organization of supporting units. The Army initially established as an overall postwar goal a regular and reserve structure capable of mobilizing 4 million men within a year of any future outbreak of war; later it set the strength of the active ground and air forces at 1.5 million. Demobilization plans called for the release of troops on an individual basis with each sol-

dier receiving point credit for length of service, combat participation and awards, time spent overseas, and parenthood. The General Staff considered the shipping available to bring overseas troops home and the capacity to process discharges in setting the number of points required for release. The whole scheme aimed at producing a systematic transition to a peacetime military structure.

WAR CRIMES TRIALS (JAPAN)

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East, held in Tokyo after World War II, prosecuted suspected Japanese war criminals. Only 28 of the 80 Class A war suspects appeared before the court. Of these individuals, 4 had been prime ministers and 19 had been military officers. Twenty-five of the 28 were found guilty, 2 others died during trial, and 1 was found mentally incompetent. Seven were sentenced to death by hanging, 16 to life in prison, and 2 to shorter terms. The emperor was not indicted.

WAR CRIMES TRIALS (GERMANY)

In the 1943 Moscow Declaration, Allied leaders announced that German war criminals would be tried where they committed their crimes, but that the Allies would prosecute the leadership of the Nazi regime together. The famous International Military Tribunal trials at Nuremberg lasted from October 20, 1945, until October 1, 1946.

Twenty-two defendants, including Hermann Göring, Commander in Chief of the *Luftwaffe* (Air Force), and Rudolf Hess, Deputy *Führer*, stood trial for crimes against peace,

war crimes, crimes against humanity, and conspiracy to commit such crimes. The trials resulted in twelve death sentences, three acquittals, and prison terms ranging from a few years to life imprisonment.



Defendants of the Nuremberg Trials. On the front row are Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Wilhelm Keitel.

Pressure for faster demobilization from the public, Congress, and the troops upset War and Navy Department plans for an orderly process. The Army felt the greatest pressure and responded by easing the eligibility requirement and releasing half of its 8 million troops by the end of 1945. Early in 1946 the Army slowed the return of troops from abroad in order to meet its overseas responsibilities. A crescendo of protest greeted the decision, including troop demonstrations in the Philippines, China, England, France, Germany, Hawaii, and even California. The public outcry diminished only after the Army more than halved its remaining strength during the first six months of 1946.

President Harry S. Truman, determined to balance the national budget, also affected the Army's manpower. He developed and through fiscal year 1950 employed a "remainder method" of calculating military budgets. He subtracted all other expenditures from revenues before recommending a military appropriation. The dollar ceiling for fiscal year 1947 dictated a new maximum Army strength of just over 1 million. To reduce to that level, the Army stopped draft calls and released all postwar draftees along with any troops eligible for demobilization. By June 30, 1947, the Army was a volunteer body of 684,000 ground troops and 306,000 airmen. It was still large for a peacetime Army, but losses of capable maintenance specialists resulted in a widespread deterioration of equipment. Active Army units, understrength and infused with barely trained replacements, represented only shadows of the efficient organizations they had been at the end of the war.



General Marshall



General Dwight D. Eisenhower
G. Ryan, 1945

Unification

While demobilization proceeded, civil and military officials wrestled with reorganizing the national security system to cope with a changed world. Army reformers, led by General of the Army George C. Marshall, Jr., and his successor as Chief of Staff, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, argued for strong centralized control at the national and theater levels, using as their model the European Theater of Operations. They wanted to preserve the basic World War II command arrangements but also to go substantially beyond them. Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal advocated a looser, more decentralized system that would essentially continue World War II practices. The largest group of reformers, including President Truman and most members of Congress, desired efficiency and its supposed corollary, economy, above all else. Forrestal and the Navy prevailed in the three-year debate that culminated in the passage of the National Security Act of 1947.

The act created a National Security Council (NSC) and a loosely federated National Military Establishment. The latter was not an executive department of the federal government, though a civilian Secretary of Defense with cabinet rank headed the organization. Only a minimal number of civilians assisted him in coordinating the armed services. The Air Force became a separate service equal to the Army and Navy; the law designated all three as executive departments. They were led by civilian secretaries who lacked cabinet rank but enjoyed direct access to the President.

Members of the National Security Council included the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the three service secretaries, and heads of other governmental agencies as appointed by the President. One of the appointees was the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board, an agency established by the act to handle the problems of industrial, manpower, and raw material mobilization in support of an overall national strategy. In theory, the National Security Council was to develop coordinated diplomatic, military, and industrial plans; recommend integrated national security policies to the President; and guide the execution of those policies the President approved. In practice, because of the inherent complexity of the responsibility, the council would produce something less than precise policy determinations.

The National Military Establishment included the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The Secretary of Defense exercised general direction over the three departments. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, composed of the military chiefs of the three services, became a statutory body in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The chiefs functioned as the principal military advisers to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense. They also formulated joint military plans, established unified (multiservice) commands in various areas of the world as well as single service (subsequently called specified) commands, and gave strategic direction to those commands. By mid-1950 the chiefs had established unified commands in the Far East, the Pacific, Alaska, the Caribbean, and Europe and a few specified commands, the most important of which was the Air Force's Strategic Air Command

(SAC), then the nation's only atomic strike force. Within each unified command, at least theoretically, Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel served under commanders of their respective services but came under the overall supervision of the Commander in Chief (CINC), whom the Joint Chiefs designated from one of the services. In fact, each component commander looked to his own service chief for guidance and only secondarily to his unified commander. The unified commander exercised true command authority only over the component commander of his own service. All else was subject to negotiation and the impacts of prestige and personalities.

Under the National Security Act, each military service retained much of its former autonomy because it was administered within a separate department. In 1948 Forrestal, ironically as the first Secretary of Defense, negotiated an interservice accord on roles and missions that hardened the separation. The Army received primary responsibility for conducting operations on land, for supplying antiaircraft units to defend the United States against air attack, and for providing occupation and security garrisons overseas. The Navy, besides remaining responsible for surface and submarine operations, retained control of its sea-based aviation and of the Marine Corps with its organic aviation. The new Air Force received jurisdiction over strategic air warfare, air transport, and combat air support of the Army.

The signal weakness of the act was not that it left the armed forces more federated than unified but that the Secretary of Defense, empowered to exercise only general supervision, could do little more than encourage cooperation among the departments. Furthermore, giving the three service secretaries direct access to the President tended to confuse lines of authority. Forrestal's suicide shortly after stepping down as Secretary vividly highlighted these faults, which prompted an amendment to the act in 1949 that partially corrected the deficiencies. It converted the National Military Establishment into an executive department, renamed the Department of Defense.

The legislation reduced the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to military departments within the Department of Defense and added a chairman to preside over the Joint Chiefs without any further substantive powers. General of the Army Omar N. Bradley became the first chairman. The Secretary of Defense received at least some of the appropriate responsibility and authority to make him truly the central figure in coordinating the activities of the three services. The latter, although reduced in strength, remained formidable. The three service secretaries retained authority to administer affairs within their respective departments; and the departments remained the principal agencies for administering, training, and supporting their respective forces. The service chiefs in their capacity as members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff retained primary responsibility for military operations.

Unification also touched officer education, though each service continued to maintain schools to meet its own specialized needs. War-time experiences led the Joint Chiefs of Staff to open three schools designed to educate officers of all the services and selected civilians: the Armed Forces Staff College to train officers in planning and conducting joint military operations; the Industrial College of the Armed Forces to instruct logisticians in mobilizing the nation's resources for



General Bradley in 1967, Long after His Retirement from Army Service

war; and the National War College to develop officers and civilians for duties connected with the execution of national policy at the highest levels.

In May 1950 Congress enacted a new Uniform Code of Military Justice applying to all the armed forces. This code, besides prescribing uniformity, reduced the severities of military discipline in the interest of improving the lot of the individual serviceman. In another troop matter, part of a larger effort for civil rights, President Truman directed the armed forces to eliminate all segregation of troops by race. The Navy and the Air Force abolished their all-African American units by June 1950. The Army, with more African-American members than its sister services, took some four years longer to desegregate. There was also high-level opposition: Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall resigned rather than implement President Truman's order.

Occupation

Throughout the demobilization, about half the Army's diminishing strength remained overseas, the bulk of that involved in the occupation of Germany and Japan. The Army also maintained a significant force in the southern portion of the former Japanese colony of Korea and smaller forces in Austria and the Italian province of Trieste.

Under a common occupation policy developed principally in conferences at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945, the Allied Powers assumed joint authority over Germany. American, British, Soviet, and French forces occupied separate zones; national matters came before an Allied Control Council composed of the commanders of the four occupation armies. The Allies similarly divided and governed the German capital, Berlin, which lay deep in the Soviet zone.

In the American zone, Army occupation troops proceeded rapidly with disarmament, demilitarization, and the eradication of Nazi influence from German life. American officials participated as members of the International Military Tribunal that tried 22 major leaders of the Nazi party and sentenced 12 to death, imprisoned 7, and acquitted 3. The Office of Military Government supervised German civil affairs within the American zone, working increasingly through German local, state, and zonal agencies, which military government officials staffed with politically reliable men. A special U.S. Constabulary, which the

THE OCCUPATION OF BERLIN

In September 1944 American, British, and Soviet representatives in London agreed to divide Berlin into national sectors of occupation (France joined later) and to govern the city jointly. Berlin's garrison surrendered to the Soviets on May 2, 1945. On July 4 soldiers of the 2d Armored Division entered the American sector. The four powers cooperated reasonably well until the summer of 1946, when ideological warfare between German political parties, coupled with East-West disagreements, transformed Berlin into the "Front City" of the Cold War. The sheer example of West Berlin's freedom and prosperity constantly subverted Communist authority in East Germany.

THE U.S. CONSTABULARY

To accomplish its occupational mission in postwar Germany, the Army established a mobile police force, the Constabulary, which went into operation in July 1946. In view of small numbers (its strength never exceeded 35,000), the Constabulary adopted a tactic of preventing disorder by maintaining visibility through frequent patrols. Constabulary soldiers wore a distinctive uniform with a shoulder-strap belt and ascot; their training included courses on German government and law. In 1947, in step with improvements in the German police, Constabulary units began training as combat reserves, completing this transformation by 1950. The Constabulary was inactivated at the end of that year.

Army organized as demobilization cut away the strength of units in Germany, operated as a mobile police force.

Each of the other occupying powers organized its zone along similar lines, but the Allied Control Council could act only by unanimous agreement. It failed to achieve unanimity on such nationwide matters as central economic administrative agencies, political parties, labor organizations, foreign and internal trade, currency, and land reform. Soviet demands and dissents accounted for most of the failures. Each zone inevitably became a self-contained administrative and economic unit; two years after the German surrender, the wartime Allies had made very little progress toward restoring German national life. In January 1947 the British and the Americans began coordinating their zonal economic policies. The eventual result, first taking shape in September 1949, was a Germany divided between the Federal Republic of Germany in the area of the American, British, and French zones and a Communist government in the Soviet zone in the east.

The occupation of Japan proceeded along different lines as a result of President Truman's insistence that all of Japan come under American control. Largely because the war in the Pacific had been primarily an American war, the President secured Allied approval to appoint General of the Army Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander, Allied Powers, for the occupation of Japan. A Far East Advisory Commission representing the eleven nations that had fought against Japan resided in Washington. A branch of that body, with representatives from the United States, Great Britain, China, and the USSR, was located in Tokyo. These provided forums for Allied viewpoints on occupation policies, but the real power rested with General MacArthur.

Unlike Germany, Japan retained its government, which, under the supervision of General MacArthur's occupation troops, disarmed the nation rapidly and without incident. An International Military Tribunal similar to the one in Germany tried twenty-five high military and political officials, sentencing seven to death. MacArthur encouraged reforms to alter the old order of government in which the emperor claimed power by divine right and ruled through an oligarchy of military, bureaucratic, and economic cliques. By mid-1947 the free election of a new Diet (legislature) and a thorough revision of the nation's constitution began the transformation of Japan into a democracy with the

THE OCCUPATION OF KOREA, SEPTEMBER 1945–AUGUST 1948

The United States in 1945 decided to occupy the southern half of Korea to prevent the Soviet Union, which had attacked Japanese forces in northern Korea, from dominating the peninsula and thus threatening American access and influence in Northeast Asia. The American occupation had two objectives: remove the Japanese colonial government and repatriate Japanese military personnel and civilians to Japan and establish a democratic and Capitalist regime controlling the entire peninsula that could survive with minimal American economic and military assistance. The United States quickly achieved its first objective, but growing Cold War tensions left each superpower unwilling to allow its rival to dominate the peninsula. Each settled for a client regime controlling half of the peninsula. When the American occupation of southern Korea ended in August 1948, the peninsula was divided into competing regimes, each dedicated to destroying the other.

emperor's role limited to that of a constitutional monarch. The way was thus open for the ultimate restoration of Japan's sovereignty.

West of the Japanese islands, on the peninsula of Korea, the course of occupation resembled that in Germany. Soviet forces, following their brief campaign against the Japanese in Manchuria, moved into Korea from the north in August 1945. U.S. Army forces, departing from Okinawa, entered from the south a month later. The 38th Parallel of north latitude that crossed the peninsula at its waist became the boundary between the forces. The Americans accepted the Japanese surrender south of the line and the Soviets above it, releasing Korea from forty years of Japanese rule.

According to wartime agreements, the Allies would give Korea full independence following a period of military occupation during which native leadership was to be regenerated and the country's economy rehabilitated. Lack of agreement among the occupying powers very quickly blighted these expectations. While the Americans regarded the 38th Parallel as only a temporary boundary between the occupation forces, the Soviets considered it a permanent delineation between spheres of influence. This interpretation, as in Germany, ruptured the administrative and economic unity of the country.

The Truman administration hoped to remove this obstacle during a meeting of foreign ministers at Moscow in December 1945. The ministers agreed that a joint U.S.-USSR commission would develop a provisional Korean government. A four-power trusteeship composed of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China would guide the provisional government for a maximum of five years. But when the commission met, the Soviet members proved willing to reunite Korea only if the Communists dominated the provisional government. The Americans refused. The resulting impasse finally prompted the United States to lay the whole Korean question before the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1947.

The Rise of a New Opponent

Soviet intransigence, as demonstrated in Germany, in Korea, and in other areas, dashed American hopes for Great Power unity. The USSR,

former British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill warned early in 1946, had lowered an “Iron Curtain” across the European continent. The Soviets quickly drew eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania behind that curtain. In Greece, where political and economic disorder led to civil war, the rebels received support from Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. In the Near East, the Soviets kept a grip on Iran by leaving troops there beyond the time specified in the wartime arrangement. They also tried to intimidate Turkey into giving them special privileges in connection with the strategic Dardanelles. In Asia, besides insisting on full control in northern Korea, the USSR had turned Manchuria over to the Chinese Communists under Mao Zedong and was encouraging him in a renewed effort to wrest power from Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang government.

Whatever the impulse behind the Soviet drive—a search for national security or a desire to promote Communist world revolution—the Soviet strategy appeared to be expansion. The Truman administration could see no inherent limits to the outward push. Each Communist gain, it seemed, would serve as a springboard from which to try another. With a large part of the world still suffering from the ravages of war, the possibilities appeared limitless. President Truman responded by blocking any extension of Communist influence until popular pressures for a better life forced a liberalization of the regime—a policy known as containment. But, viewing the industrialized European continent as the decisive area, the administration at first limited its containment policy to Western Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East and attempted other solutions in East Asia.

China in any case presented a dilemma. On the one hand, American military observers doubted that Chiang Kai-shek could defeat the Communists with aid short of direct American participation in the civil war. President Truman considered such an open-ended commitment unacceptable. On the other hand, an attempt by the President’s special envoy, General Marshall, following his Army retirement, to negotiate an end to the war on terms that would allow Communist participation in a Kuomintang-dominated government proved futile. The Truman administration consequently adopted the attitude of “letting the dust settle.” Part of the basis for this view was a prevalent American belief that the Chinese Communist revolt was more Chinese than Communist, that its motivation was nationalistic, not imperialistic. Though the

THE GREEK CIVIL WAR

In January 1945 British troops suppressed a Greek Communist coup in Athens. The Communists renewed guerrilla war in March 1946. Severe financial difficulties forced the British government to terminate its responsibilities in the spring of 1947. The United States intervened with economic and military aid. Lt. Gen. James Van Fleet commanded an advisory mission of 250 officers who took operational control of Greek forces. Reinvigorated Greek troops went to the offensive in 1948. The war ended in the summer of 1949, when Yugoslav Marshal Josip B. Tito split with Stalin and closed Yugoslavia’s borders to the pro-Moscow Greek Communists, forcing many to retreat into Albanian exile.



American Truce Team with Chinese Communists
Wayne DeWitt Larabee, 1946

dust appeared to be settling in favor of the Chinese Communists by the end of 1948, the administration had some hope that an American-Chinese friendship could still be restored.

Next door in Korea, the United Nations, acting in response to the request of the Truman administration, sent a commission to supervise free elections throughout the peninsula. But Soviet authorities declared the UN project illegal and refused the commission entry above the 38th Parallel. The United Nations then sponsored an elected government in the southern half of the peninsula, which in August 1948 became the Republic of Korea (South Korea). The following month the Soviets countered by establishing a Communist government, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), above the parallel. Three months later they announced the withdrawal of their occupation forces. The United States followed suit in mid-1949, leaving only an advisory group to help train the South Korean armed forces.

In the main arena in Western Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East, blunt diplomatic exchanges finally produced a withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iran. But it was around America's economic strength that the United States constructed its containment strategy, an approach based on the judgment that the American monopoly on atomic weapons would deter the USSR from direct military aggression in favor of exploiting civil strife in countries prostrated by the war. The American strategy focused on providing economic assistance to friends and former enemies alike to alleviate the social conditions conducive to Communist expansion.

To ease the situations in Turkey and Greece, President Truman in 1947 obtained \$400 million from Congress with which to assist those two countries. "I believe," the President declared, "that it must be the

policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures ... that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way ... that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.” This policy, subsequently labeled the Truman Doctrine, had only limited application at the time; but the President’s appeal to universal principles to justify the program in effect placed the United States in the position of opposing Communist expansion in any part of the world.

A broader program of economic aid followed. General Marshall, who became Secretary of State in January 1947, proposed that the United States pursue the economic recovery in Europe as a single task, not nation by nation, and that a single program combine the resources of European countries with American aid. This Marshall Plan drew an immediate response. Sixteen nations, who also considered the needs and resources of West Germany, devised a four-year European Recovery Program incorporating their resources and requiring some \$16 billion from the United States. In a last effort to promote Great Power unity, the Truman administration invited the USSR to participate. The Soviet Union refused and discouraged the initial interest of some countries within its sphere of influence. In October the Soviet Union organized the Cominform, a committee for coordinating Communist parties in Europe to fight the Marshall Plan as “an instrument of American imperialism.” More effective opposition came from isolationists in Congress, who balked when President Truman first requested approval of the program. Only after the Soviets engineered a coup d’état that placed a Communist government in power in Czechoslovakia did Congress appropriate funds in April 1948.

Meanwhile, to protect the western hemisphere against Communist intrusion, the Truman administration in September 1947 helped devise the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty), the first regional arrangement for collective defense under provisions of the UN Charter. Eventually signed by all twenty-one American republics, the treaty considered armed aggression against one signatory as an attack upon all. Responses, by independent choice of each signatory, could range from severance of diplomatic relations to economic sanctions to military counteraction.

In March 1948 a second regional arrangement, the Brussels Treaty, drew five nations of Western Europe (Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) into a long-term economic and military alliance. The signatories received encouragement from President Truman, who declared before Congress his confidence “that the determination of the free countries of Europe to protect themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to help them.” Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, in a notable display of bipartisan cooperation, followed with a resolution, which the Senate passed in June, authorizing the commitment of American military strength to regional alliances such as the Brussels Treaty.

Out of all of this activity grew the real basis of postwar international relations: West versus East, anti-Communists against Communists, and those nations aligned with the United States confronting those as-

The President’s appeal to universal principles to justify the program in effect placed the United States in the position of opposing Communist expansion in any part of the world.

sembled under the leadership of the Soviet Union, a Cold War between power blocs. Leadership of the Western bloc fell to the United States, because it was the only Western power with sufficient resources to take the lead in containing Soviet expansion.

The Trends of Military Policy

Although pursued as a program of economic assistance, the American policy of containment needed military underpinning. Containment first of all was a defensive measure: The USSR had not completely demobilized. On the contrary, it was maintaining over 4 million men under arms, keeping armament industries in high gear, and rearming some of its satellites. Containment needed the support of a military policy of deterrence, a strategy and force structure possessing sufficient strength and balance to discourage any Soviet or Soviet-supported military aggression.

Postwar military policy, however, did not develop as a full response to the needs of containment. The traditional and current trend of American military thinking focused on mobilization in the event of war, not the maintenance of ready forces to prevent war. Army plans for manpower mobilization concentrated on instituting Universal Military Training (UMT). Technological advances, argued advocates such as Brig. Gen. (Ret.) John M. Palmer, had eliminated the grace of time and distance that had in the past permitted the nation the opportunity to mobilize its untrained citizenry. Modern warfare needed a huge reservoir of trained men. Late in 1945 President Truman asked the Congress for legislation requiring male citizens to undergo a year of military training (not *service*) upon reaching the age of eighteen or after completing high school. Universal Military Training quickly became the subject of wide debate. Objections ranged from mild criticism that it was “a system in which the American mind finds no pleasure” to its denunciation as a “Nazi program.” Regardless of the President’s urgings, studies that produced further justification, and various attempts to make the program more palatable, Congress with broad public support refused to act on the controversial issue for the next five years.

Lacking Universal Military Training, the Army would depend almost entirely on the reserve components for reinforcements of trained personnel during mobilization. Limited funds also affected the strength of the reserve components. Enrollment in the National Guard and Reserves of all three services at mid-1950 totaled over 2.5 million. Owing largely to restricted budgets, members in active training numbered fewer than 1 million. The bulk of this active strength rested in the Army National Guard and Organized Reserve Corps. The National Guard, with 325,000 members, included 27 understrength divisions. The active strength of the Organized Reserve Corps, some 186,000, primarily manned a multitude of small combat support and service units, also generally understrength. The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps provided a final source of trained strength. In early 1950 it contained about 219,000 high school and college students.

The fear of another depression constituted the single most important inhibitor to increased military spending by the Truman administration. Moreover, the advent of the atomic bomb appeared to provide



*Olive Drab Field Jacket with Double Brass,
Used 1947–1949*

an economic alternative to large standing armies and navies. President Truman in particular considered the American nuclear monopoly as the primary deterrent to direct Soviet military action. Determining the size of the force meant balancing what the President perceived as a low risk of Soviet invasion of Western Europe against the real possibility that an unbalanced federal budget required to maintain large conventional forces would lead to economic downturn and would fatally undermine containment.

The size of the budget thus limited the size of the armed forces. The total strength of active forces gradually decreased from the figure reached at the end of demobilization. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps declined in strength, while the Air Force actually grew slightly larger. About a third of the Air Force constituted the SAC, the main deterrent to Soviet military aggression. Louis A. Johnson, who became Secretary of Defense in March 1949, gave full support to a defense based primarily on strategic air power, largely because of his dedication to economy. Intent on ridding the Department of Defense of what he considered “costly war-born spending habits,” Johnson reduced defense expenditures below even the restrictive ceilings in President Truman’s recommendations. As a result, by mid-1950 the Air Force, with 411,000 members, maintained only 48 combat groups. The Navy, with 377,000 sailors, had 670 ships in its active fleet and 4,300 operational aircraft. The Marine Corps, 75,000 strong, mustered 2 skeleton divisions and 2 air wings. The Army, down to 591,000 members, fielded 10 weak divisions and 5 regimental combat teams with the constabulary in Germany equal to another division.

Everyone recognized that war with the Soviet Union posed immense dangers. The joint war plans of the period postulated the possibility of a Soviet sweep deep into Western Europe. Initial iterations of these plans envisioned that the Western occupation forces would simply withdraw from the continent as quickly as possible. Subsequent versions postulated a fighting retreat and possible maintenance of an enclave from which to launch a counteroffensive once the United States had mobilized. Only with the advent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) did joint planners seriously consider the defense of Western Europe in depth. Toward the midpoint of these efforts, the planners added an air-atomic offensive from the Middle East and North Africa against the Soviet industrial infrastructure. It would weaken the Soviet military capacity for a long war, but it would not provide a close defense of Western Europe.

The strength reductions, mobilization strategy, and heavy reliance on the atomic bomb and strategic air power indicated that the idea of deterring aggression through balanced ready forces played only a limited role in postwar military policy. As of early June 1950 this calculated risk still appeared adequate to the situation.

The Army of 1950

As the Army underwent its drastic postwar reduction, from 8 million men and 89 divisions in 1945 to 591,000 men and 10 divisions in 1950, it also underwent numerous structural changes. At the department level, General Eisenhower in 1946 had approved a reorganiza-



President Truman

tion that restored the General Staff to its prewar position. The principal adjustment involved the elimination of the very powerful Operations Division (OPD) from which General Marshall had controlled wartime operations. Eisenhower brought back the prewar structure of the General Staff with five coequal divisions under new names: Personnel and Administration; Intelligence; Organization and Training; Service, Supply, and Procurement; and Plans and Operations. He also abolished the Headquarters, Army Service Forces, in 1946. The administrative and technical services formerly under that headquarters regained their prewar status as departmental agencies. In 1948 Eisenhower's successor, General Bradley, redesignated the Army Ground Forces as the Army Field Forces and restricted its responsibilities to education, training, doctrine, and the service test of new equipment.

These and other organizational changes became a matter of statute with the passage of the Army Reorganization Act in 1950. The act confirmed the power of the Secretary of the Army to administer departmental affairs and relieved the Army Chief of Staff from command of the field forces. Under the Secretary, the Army Chief of Staff was responsible for the Army's readiness and operational plans and for worldwide implementation of the approved plans and policies of the department. He had the assistance of general and special staffs whose size and composition could be adjusted as requirements changed. Below the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Army Field Forces was directly responsible for developing tactical doctrine, for controlling the Army school system, and for supervising the field training of Army units. He exercised these responsibilities through the headquarters of the six Continental Army Areas into which the United States was divided.

Under the new act, the Secretary of the Army received the authority to determine the number and strength of the Army's combat arms and services. Three combat arms—Infantry, Armor, and Artillery—received statutory recognition. Armor became a continuation of another older arm, now eliminated, the Cavalry. Artillery represented a merger of the old Field Artillery, Coast Artillery, and Antiaircraft Artillery. The services numbered fourteen and included The Adjutant General's Corps, Army Medical Service, Chaplain's Corps, Chemical Corps, Corps of Engineers, Finance Corps, Inspector General's Corps, Judge Advocate General's Corps, Military Police Corps, Ordnance Corps, Quartermaster Corps, Signal Corps, Transportation Corps, and Women's Army Corps. Army Aviation, designated neither arm nor service, existed as a quasi-arm equipped with small fixed-wing craft and a very few primitive helicopters.

The Army's best body of troops at mid-1950 consisted largely of World War II veterans, a sizable but diminishing group. The need to obtain replacements quickly during demobilization, the distractions and relaxed atmosphere of occupation duty, and a postwar training program less demanding than that of the war years impeded the combat readiness of newer Army members. Some veterans claimed that the new Uniform Code of Military Justice, because it softened military discipline, had blunted the Army's combat ability even more.

Half the Army's major combat units were deployed overseas. Of the 10 divisions, the Far Eastern Command controlled 4 infantry divisions on occupation duty in Japan. The European Command had another

The Army Chief of Staff was responsible for the Army's readiness and operational plans and for worldwide implementation of the approved plans and policies of the department.

infantry division in Germany. The remaining 5 (2 airborne, 2 infantry, and 1 armored divisions) in the United States constituted a general reserve to meet emergencies. All 10 divisions had undergone organizational changes, most of them prompted by the war experience. Under new tables of organization and equipment, the firepower and mobility of the infantry division received a boost through the addition of a tank battalion and an antiaircraft battalion and through a rise in the number of pieces in each artillery battery from 4 to 6. At the regimental level, the World War II cannon and antitank companies had disappeared; the new tables added a tank company and a 4.2-inch mortar company, as well as 57-mm. and 75-mm. recoilless rifles. The postwar economies, however, had forced the Army to skeletonize its combat units. Nine of the 10 divisions were far under their authorized strength. Their infantry regiments had only 2 of the normal 3 battalions, and most artillery battalions had only 2 of the normal 3 firing batteries. Most lacked organic armor. No unit had its wartime complement of weapons, and those weapons on hand as well as other equipment were largely worn-out leftovers from World War II. None of the combat units, as a result, came anywhere near to possessing the punch conceived under the new organizational design.

The Cold War Intensifies

The deterioration in military readiness through mid-1950 proceeded in the face of a worsening trend in international events, especially from mid-1948 forward. In Germany, in further protest against Western attempts to establish a national government and in particular against efforts to institute currency reforms in Berlin, the USSR in June 1948 moved to force the Americans, British, and French out of the capital by blockading the road and rail lines through the Soviet occupation zone over which troops and supplies from the West reached the Allied sectors of the city. Although General Lucius D. Clay, the American military governor, preferred to test Soviet resolve with an armed convoy, at the

THE ARMY AND THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

Russian forces blocked the routes of supply by road, rail, and canal from the West to the American and British occupation sectors in Berlin. General Clay's attempt to gain approval for a plan to run armored columns down the roads and crash through these barricades failed because the British and Americans feared it would help precipitate a war. Clay came up with the "impossible" idea of supplying Berlin by air. Following the first modest food deliveries in June 1948, the airlift steadily gained proficiency. When the blockade ended in May 1949, the U.S.-U.K. Air Forces had flown in 1.218 million net metric tons of supplies, chiefly coal and food, to Berlin.



Berliners watch a C-54 land at Tempelhof, Berlin, 1948.

suggestion of his British counterpart, General Sir Brian Robertson, he countered with an airlift. The U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force, with some help from the British and U.S. Navies, loaded, flew in, and distributed food, fuel, and other necessities to keep the Allied sectors of Berlin supplied. The success of the airlift and a telling counterblockade, which shut off shipments of goods to the Soviet sector from West Germany, finally moved the Soviets to lift the blockade in May 1949.

Meanwhile, in April 1949, the United States joined NATO, the military alliance growing out of the Brussels Treaty. The United States and Canada combined with ten Western European nations so that “an armed attack against one or more of them” would “be considered an attack against them all,” a provision aimed at discouraging a Soviet march on Europe. The signatories agreed to earmark forces for service under NATO direction. For the United States’ part, the budgetary restrictions, mobilization strategy, and continuing emphasis on air power and the bomb handicapped its military commitment to the alliance. The basic budget ceiling and Secretary of Defense Johnson’s ardent economy drive defeated an effort by some officials to increase the nation’s conventional forces. Nevertheless, by joining NATO, the United States pledged that it would fight to protect common Allied interests in Europe and thus explicitly enlarged containment beyond the economic realm.

Concurrently with negotiations leading to the NATO alliance, the National Security Council reviewed all postwar military aid programs, some of which stemmed from World War II obligations. By 1949 the United States was providing military equipment and training assistance to Greece, Turkey, Iran, China, Korea, the Philippines, and the Latin American republics. Based on this examination, President Truman proposed combining all existing programs and extending eligibility to any anti-Communist government. This became the administration’s primary means of containing communism outside of Europe. The result was the Mutual Defense Assistance Program of October 1949. The Department of the Army, executive agent for the program, sent each recipient country a military assistance advisory group. Composed of Army, Navy, and Air Force sections, each advisory group assisted its host government in determining the amount and type of aid needed and helped train the armed forces of each country in the use and tactical employment of materiel received from the United States.

A new and surprising turn came in the late summer of 1949, when, two to three years ahead of Western intelligence estimates, an explosion over Siberia announced the Soviets had an atomic weapon. On the heels of the USSR’s achievement, the civil war in China ended in favor of the Chinese Communists. Chiang Kai-shek withdrew to the island of Taiwan in December 1949. Two months later Communist China and the USSR negotiated a treaty of mutual assistance, an ominous event in terms of future U.S.-China relations.

The United States’ loss of the atomic monopoly prompted its broad review of the entire political and strategic position at top staff levels in the National Security Council, Department of State, and Department of Defense. A special National Security Council committee at the same time considered the specific problem posed by the Soviet achievement. Out of the committee came a decision to intensify research on the hydrogen bomb to assure the United States the lead in the field of nuclear

Communist China and the USSR negotiated a treaty of mutual assistance, an ominous event in terms of future U.S.-China relations.

weapons. Out of the broader review, completed in April 1950, came recommendations known as NSC 68 (the file number of the paper) for a large expansion of American military, diplomatic, and economic efforts to meet the changed world situation. The planning staffs in the Department of Defense began at once to translate the military recommendations into force levels and budgets. There remained the question of whether the plans when completed would persuade President Truman to lift the ceiling on military appropriations. Events in Korea soon resolved the issue.

After the Communist victory in China, the United States applied its policy of containment in Asia. In January 1950 Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson publicly defined the U.S. “defense line” in Asia as running south from the Aleutian Islands to Japan, to the Ryukyu Islands, and then to the Philippines. This delineation raised a question about Taiwan and Korea, which lay outside the line. Secretary Acheson stated that if they were attacked, “the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire world under the Charter of the United Nations.” A question remained whether the Communist bloc would construe his statement as a definite American commitment to defend Taiwan and Korea if they came under attack.

The United States had responded to the emergence of a bipolar world with a policy of containing the political ambitions of the Communist bloc while at the same time deterring general war. In the view of senior Army leaders, by mid-1950 the United States had not yet backed that policy with a matching military establishment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the United States demobilize so quickly after World War II? What were the consequences? Have there been parallels since?
2. What did unification entail? What are some reasons for greater unification of the services, and what are some against?
3. What were the areas of friction between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II? How did they affect the U.S. Army?
4. What were the major components of the U.S. policy of containment in Europe? How successful was the effort? Could the new United Nations have filled this role?
5. Why were Berlin and Germany so important to the United States?
6. Discuss the pros and cons of Universal Military Training. Why did the attempt to pass UMT legislation fail?

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